



NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION
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STATEMENT BY

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NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

UPON ACCEPTANCE OF

THE PRESIDENT'S SAFETY AWARD FOR 1960

IN THE DEPARTMENTAL AUDITORIUM

WASHINGTON, D.C.

JUNE 21, 1961

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I am deeply gratified and honored to receive on behalf of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration one of the three President's Safety Awards for accident prevention during 1960.

As you know, NASA has a unique role as a research and development agency pioneering in the fields of aeronautics and space. We have had to develop new types of safety rules and regulations to govern performance of work that is often extremely hazardous in nature.

This includes test flying of experimental aircraft. For example, NASA's most advanced rocket-powered plane, the X-15, has flown at speeds ranging up to 3,200 miles per hour and at altitudes of more than 32 miles. NASA is developing and testing high-energy, highly explosive fuels which have never previously been used. High-voltage electricity is utilized in many NASA experiments, as is air pressurized to several thousands of pounds to the square inch and heated to temperatures of several thousand degrees Fahrenheit. The agency is

developing, testing, and launching rockets and spacecraft, and is operating two nuclear reactors and a cyclotron.

The award presented to NASA today testifies to the effectiveness of our safety measures. It also is evidence of the fact that every one of NASA's approximately 17,000 employees is dedicated to the goal of making these measures working realities.

NASA's safety record is not confined to installations in the United States. We operate a network of tracking and data facilities on a worldwide basis. The safety performance of employees in other countries has also been outstanding.

It should be noted, too, that the NASA safety policy is designed not only to protect its own personnel and facilities, but also to eliminate hazards to all persons and property near installations or in the path of space and aeronautical experiments.

NASA strongly supports the Federal Safety Council and has taken an active hand in organizing field councils, such as the Hampton Roads and the Cleveland Federal Safety Councils.

As part of the United States program for manned space flight, on May 5 Astronaut Alan Shepard was rocketed 115 miles above the surface of the earth and returned unharmed. Figuratively, this flight was the apex of a pyramid of effort over 31 months, which involved the most painstaking tests of every component in the Mercury capsule, in the rockets for boosting the capsule into space, and in the supporting complex of ground facilities. As incredible as it may seem, no less than 1,200,000 tests have been made to qualify the Project Mercury system as spaceworthy.

A key feature of the Mercury capsule system is an escape tower, equipped with rockets to provide the astronaut the ultimate degree of safety. As repeated prior tests proved, if the booster for Shepard's flight had malfunctioned in any way, the rockets of the safety tower would have fired instantly and would, at tremendous speed, have carried him and the capsule out of harm's way.

Many of the 1,200,000 tests that made the first United States manned space flight such a success reflected NASA's safety program, which is carried out in every area of science and technology and is an integral part of all the agency's activities.

I can assure you that every employee of NASA will continue vigilantly and enthusiastically to participate in the safety policies for which we have today received the President's award.

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